

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 12374 051737Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12374

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TBIO, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET SCIENTIST PUBLISHES ARTICLE ON GENETIC ENGINEERING

1. EMBASSY COMMENDS TO DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION ARTICLE "CON-
TEMPORARY DIRECTION OF MOLECULAR GENETICS - GENETIC ENGINEERING,"
WRITTEN BY ACADEMICIAN A.A. BAYEV AND PUBLISHED IN JULY 1976
ISSUE OF "VESTNIK AKADEMII MEDITSINSKIKH NAUK SSSR."

2. BAYEV ARTICLE IS FIRST SOVIET PUBLICATION KNOWN TO US
WHICH MENTIONS RECENT WESTERN CONCERNS AND DEBATES ON ETHICAL
ASPECTS OF GENETIC ENGINEERING AND PROPOSALS FOR A MORATORIUM
ON RESEARCH IN SOME CATEGORIES OF GENETIC ENGINEERING, RECOMBINANT-
DNA AND GENETIC MANIPULATION. IT SEEMS ALSO TO BE FIRST
INSTANCE IN USSR OPENLY DISCUSSING AND EVALUATING DANGERS
TO RESEARCHERS, MANKIND AND BIOSPHERE.

3. BESIDES ABOVE DESCRIPTION OF WESTERN EFFORTS TO CONTROL
RESEARCH, BAYEV'S 11-PAGE ARTICLE ALSO REVIEWS LAST FIVE YEARS OF
WESTERN WORK ON RECOMBINANT-DNA. IT IS ANNOTATED WITH OVER 25 WESTERN
REFERENCES AND ONLY ONE SOVIET REFERENCE.

4. IN TRUE SOVIET TRADITION BAYEV SOFT-PEDALS WESTERN CONCERN ABOUT
SAFETY. HE ASSURES HIS READERS THAT IN A SOCIALISTIC SOCIETY MIS-
USE BY INDIVIDUAL SCIENTISTS OR INSTITUTIONS IS NOT A PROBLEM SINCE
ALL IS GEARED FOR SOCIAL AND COMMON GOOD. BAYEV FURTHER STATES THAT,
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 12374 051737Z

AFTER ALL, SCIENTISTS IN U.S. AND OTHER CAPITALISTIC COUNTRIES

KNOW THEIR OWN SYSTEM BEST AND THEREFORE THEIR CONCERNS MAY BE JUSTIFIED.

5. COMMENT: STRUCTURE OF ARGUMENTS SUGGESTS TO US THAT BAYEV COUNTS ON HIS READERSHIP NOT TO BELIEVE OR ACCEPT THAT SOVIET SYSTEM IS COMPLETELY BENIGN. HE MAY EXPECT THAT SOVIET READERS WILL MENTALLY DISCOUNT BAYEV'S SPECIFIC EXCLUSIONS AND DISCLAIMERS OF DANGER IN GENETIC ENGINEERING RESEARCH WITHIN SOVIET UNION. BAYEV'S AIM COULD BE TO DRAW ATTENTION TO DANGERS BY TELLING HIS READERS THAT THERE ARE NONE IN SOVIET UNION, BUT AHT THEY EXIST IN WEST.

6. IT SEEMS WORTHY TO NOTE FACT THAT BAYEV, AN OFFICER OF "BIG ACADEMY" (ACADEMICIAN - SECRETARY FOR BIOCHEMISTRY AND BIOPHYSICS) HAD TO PUBLISH ARTICLE IN JOURNAL OF MEDICAL ACADEMY OF WHICH HE HIMSELF IS NOT MEMBER. HIS ONLY TIE APPEARS TO BE THAT HE PRACTICED MEDICINE FROM 1927 TO 1930. IT COULD BE THAT OVCHINNIKOV BLOCKED PUBLICATION OF BAYEV'S ARTICLE IN "BIG ACADEMY" PUBLICATION BY VIRTUE OF BEING VP IN CHARGE OF BAYEV'S DEPARTMENT AS WELL AS MEMBER OF EDITORIAL BOARD OF "VESTNIK" OF "BIG ACADEMY".

7. DEPARTMENT MAY BE AWARE THAT OVCHINNIKOV HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN CAMPAIGNING FOR MORE GENETIC RESEARCH EFFORT FOLLOWING HIS 1975 TRIP TO U.S. AND THAT HE GAVE SPEECH TO PARTY MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS ON THIS SUBJECT LAST DECEMBER. SINCE BOTH BAYEV AND OVCHINNIKOV BECAME CORRESPONDING MEMBERS IN 1968 AND FULL MEMBERS IN 1970, THERE MAY BE SIGNIFICANT RIVALRY BETWEEN THEM NOT DISSIMILAR TO THAT KNOWN TO EXIST BETWEEN BASOV AND PROKHOROV. BAYEV'S RECORD AS OPPONENT OF LYSENKO MAY ALSO BE RELEVANT TO HIS PRESENT INTENTIONS. END OF COMMENT.

8. COPY OF BAYEV ARTICLE BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE COMMENTS ON ARTICLE AND ABOVE INFORMATION. STOESSEL

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